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THE SETTLEMENT  
OF  
SOUTHOLD.

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By George Rogers Howell.

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# THE SETTLEMENT OF SOUTHOLD,

—BY—

GEORGE ROGERS HOWELL.

We have received and read at this late date the account of the 250th anniversary of the settlement of Southold in October, 1640, or 1641, which was celebrated on the 27th day of August, 1890. It makes a handsome octavo of 220 pages, and aside from a few what we may charitably term errors, is a work creditable to all concerned. But these errors are, as it happens, of vital importance if you have any care for a correct history of the town. It is well that the statement was made in the introduction that the 27th of August was selected for anniversary day as a matter of convenience. It certainly represents nothing in the history of the settlement of Southold, for on the 27th of August, 1640, not one of the settlers of the town was in the bounds of Yennicott.

According to Trumbull and the historians Thompson, Wood, Lambert, Hollister and Palfrey, who all followed Trumbull, the town was settled in October of that year.

A continuous clamor for an earlier date is a useless expenditure of zeal and nothing else. Repetition of what is false is neither fact, nor argument, nor good taste. I challenge the world to find evidence of a settlement of Southold by Europeans previous to October, 1641.

Now let us see what that careful historian, Mr. Charles B. Moore, says. To know Mr. Moore was to love him. He was careful, tender of the truth, and I prized his friendship beyond all expression. But, like other men, he was not infallible. He was also a lawyer, and in this case was retained by his native town, and his plea was special

pleading, that of a lawyer making out a case, not of a judge balancing evidence.

On p. 142, for instance, he says: "We have the notice that Rev. John Youngs was forbidden to sail from Great Yarmouth, the port of entry and departure for that region. This was dated 1637, but may have occurred earlier."

How could there be a mistake when the transaction was entered in an official book of entries of passengers with continuous dates from year to year and from month to month, page after page? The six entries previous to the one where it is recorded that Mr. John Youngs and his wife Joan and six children were forbidden to leave England was of the same date, May 11, 1637, and the next following entry was dated May 12, 1637, and the record explicitly adds: "He went not from Yarmouth." But all the historians say that he did come over in the summer of 1640. As he led the colony and is called the first settler, he certainly could not have been there previous to September of that year. There were five Englishmen in this country at that time, apparently of the same generation, scattered over New England including the Southold minister, by the name of John Young, or Youngs. One of these was in Salem in 1637, and him Mr. Moore has, without warrant and against fact, selected as the Southold leader (p. 145). The Salem John Young of 1637, however, died at Charlestown Dec. 29, 1672, according to Savage, who traced his career, and the Southold pastor died Feb. 24, 1672.

And now we have an instance of

how unsafe it is for a writer to trust to his memory for dates and things. It will occasionally lead him to make statements very far from the truth—unintentionally, no doubt, but still none the less false, and misleading the innocent and uninformed reader. Take this statement, for instance, on page 6: "The Hon. Henry P. Hedges was invited to address the meeting in the afternoon, as the representative of the sister town of Southampton, which is not greatly younger than Southold, having become organized and united to Connecticut in 1644."

Men and brethren, Southampton celebrated her 250th anniversary on June 12, 1890—the anniversary of the second deed of sale of the land from Lord Sterling's agent, and Dr. Whitaker was present at that celebration. And yet he appears to have forgotten this, and if his language, quoted above, means anything it conveys the impression that the town of Southampton was settled in 1644. And so anyone unacquainted with the facts would understand him.

Furthermore the town was settled in June, 1640. Governor John Winthrop, the careful and accurate historian of New England and a contemporaneous witness to the event, affirms it and the town records contain a paper dated in and at Southampton in the month of June, 1640. "Not greatly younger than Southold?" How could he publish such an absurdity? It is useless to quibble on the word "organized," so nearly synonymous with the word "settled." It was organized when it was settled. It had all the machinery of a municipality, such as laws, courts, church and school from the beginning in 1640. The union with Connecticut did not give it any organization which it had not before. By that union an organized town went from an independency to a confederacy; it simply changed its political relation. Well, the statement was so astounding that I wrote to Dr. Whitaker, asking him who wrote the introduction to this book, which contains the paragraph quoted above. I was told by him that it came from his pen. Then I wrote again asking him what he meant by the statement. To this he sent me the following explanation which needs another letter to explain:

"What you quote was written to give the reader information respecting the preparations for the celebration, just as other parts of the introduction were. The intention was to say nothing specifically about the time at which Southampton was settled. By the revolution there in 1664 Southampton was organized and united to Connecticut and so became an acquired part of the United Colonies of New England as Southold had become earlier through its union with New Haven. Thus Southampton, and Southold became organically related to each other. Hence the mention of the significant transaction which made Southampton a sister town of Southold. I am happy to give you the information which you request."

I am sure I am grateful to receive information. But this "information" varies widely from the statements of all the early New England historians. What really did happen was this: New Haven bought and settled Southold (we say for the present) in October, 1640. But Southold ceased to be a dependency to New Haven town within two or three years, for (Col. Rec. of Ct. Vol. 1, p. 110) at a General Court held at New Haven Oct. 23, 1643, this language is used: "And whereas Stamford, Guilford, Yennicoke, have upon the same foundations and engagements entered into combination with vs, &c." Southold from at least 1643 to 1662 was, therefore, on a parity with these towns and New Haven, sending representatives to the latter town to General Court as Southampton did to Hartford of the Connecticut Colony from 1645 to 1662, when occurred the union of the New Haven and the Connecticut Colonies. In 1662 Southampton and Southold became "organically sister towns" of the same Colony.

But even when we have got the Doctor out of this muddle, how does the explanation explain? I am afraid that as often as I see this preposterous claim of superior antiquity put forth for Southold the spirit within me will be stirred to rise and smite it with the truth. It is a small matter, anyhow, but if a man attempts to write history let him be ready to give up an old belief when truth demands it.

So far I have supposed that Southold was settled in October, 1640, accepting the long line of historians who followed Trumbull. But Trumbull wrote one hundred and fifty years after 1640, and may be wrong himself. Indeed Mr. William Wallace Tooker, of Sag Harbor, has made it quite probable, in an article of his in the Magazine of New England History for January, 1892, that it was not until



October, 1641, that Southold was settled. And after examining his authorities I agree with his conclusions. But I did more. Perplexed on all sides to learn the facts pertaining to the settlement of Southold, I turned to Dr Whitaker's history of the town. I found there, to my amazement, a list of names to the number of one hundred and forty—the author says, but incorrectly, one hundred and thirty-eight—heads of families as the settlers of the town. A mighty strong settlement!—in fact unequalled by any settlement on these shores from 1620 to date.

They are very justly enlogized as the Puritan ancestors of the town. Still I was so skeptical as to the numbers that I looked over the earliest rate list in the State Library—that of 1683 in the second volume of the Documentary History of the State. Of the ninety family names in the one hundred and forty settlers of Whitaker we find forty-one on this rate list of 1683. Where are the missing forty-nine? Where? Some of them not yet in Southold—some were transients and some were probably servants.

But we want something more accurate than this. Let us compare the list of Mr. Whitaker with Moore's Index of Southold and the two volumes of the Records of Southold in print. We classify the 140 names in various classes according to information derived from those two authorities of Moore and the Southold town records:

#### Classes.

1. Sons or grandsons of first settlers, minors or not born in 1641	46
2. Those who came between 1650 and 1656	20
3. Those who came later than 1656	23
4. Transients or removed by 1657	27
5. Not mentioned by Moore or the Southold records—no evidence of being residents	13
6. Mentioned as being here in 1649	2
7. Here in 1645	2
8. First here in 1642	1
9. First mention of being here in 1641	2
10. Never residents	4
Number in Whitaker's list	140

Male heads of families are generally considered the first settlers of towns, because for the most part they are responsible for the existence of the settlement. But taking the evidence of Mr. Charles B. Moore and the printed records of Southold themselves, we find that we must reject forty-six at the start as being children or

yet unborn in the year 1641. This leaves us ninety-four adults. Now we must deduct classes 2, 3, 4 and 5 to eliminate late comers. This leaves eleven. I am responsible for the tenth class. I can account for four men on his list that never could have been residents. They lived elsewhere. They are Benoni Flint, Jeremiah Meacham, George Miller and Francis Nicholls. Deducting these from the last remainder, we have seven. There were two or three transients who were here at least as early as 1649, perhaps earlier. So we will say the number of settlers safely to be reckoned is ten. How the "men in buckram" have dwindled! But, then, we have saved ten. And that is about all there were in Southold in 1649. Perhaps some denizen of that village thinks such a statement almost sacrilegious or idiotic. Wait a bit. Look in the account of the anniversary, in the address of Mr. Moore, pages 131 and 132, and notice the words of Secretary Van Tienhoven, written in 1650. He says: "The English of the colony of New Haven settled two villages at the bight of the aforesaid inland sea, about three leagues from the east point of said island: one called Southampton, containing about ten or twelve houses; the other Southold, about thirty houses."

This was written in 1650 and on May 10, 1649, Southampton had twenty-nine male heads of families. At least four other men were living there—Rev. Robert Fordham, Tristram Hedges, William Barnes and Arthur Bostwick, who are not on the list of townsmen in that year. These families can all or nearly all be located as living in separate houses, each on its own homestead. So that Secretary Van Tienhoven was right in his figures, only he has given Southampton's number of houses to Southold and Southold's to Southampton.

Now let us investigate the Jackson and the Sunderland bogies. The printed records of the colony of Massachusetts Bay have the name of this same Richard Jackson living in Cambridge and a representative at the General Court from that town in 1637, 1638, 1639, 1641, 1648, 1653 and 1661. As Mr. William Wallace Tooker writes, Thomas Lechford, in his Note

Book recently printed, says Jackson was residing in Cambridge up to Aug. 7, 1640, and again Sept. 21, 1640. He got a deed of land in Hashamomock of date Aug. 15, 1640. He was then under sentence of a fine imposed on May 22, 1639, and in trouble and disgust left the Massachusetts Colony for a short time until justice was done him. In September, 1640, his fine was remitted, and in October he sold to Wetherby his land and what little log hut he may have constructed there in a month's residence. Wetherby was a sailor and his home the sea, and no evidence can be found of his personal residence on the Jackson shack for even a week. All this is no orderly organized settlement of Southold.

Now as to Sunderland. Mr. Tooker shows that the first mention of Farrett's being in America was, according to Lechford, on June 7, 1639. Farrett says himself that Lion Gardiner's purchase of Gardiner's Island from the Indians, May 10, 1639, was previous to Farrett's coming to America. Sunderland obtained his deeds for Oyster Bay lands June 18, 1640. There is no evidence that Sunderland ever held in fee an acre of land in Southold. Lechford mentions Sunderland as a resident of Newport, R. I., on Aug. 20, 1640. The Colonial records of Rhode Island also show that Sun-

derland, with fifty-eight others, was admitted to be inhabitants of Aquidneck (the island of Rhode Island) on Oct. 1, 1640. He may have stopped on the north shore of Southold a few days or a few weeks as the agent of Farrett to look out for his interests, but he never can be considered a resident, and, what is essential, is shown to be living elsewhere when he is needed as a settler in Southold.

Now in all this we utterly disclaim all hostility to Southold, her people or her interests. We have none but the friendliest feeling toward them all. We are only interested in this matter as an historical question. I was as much surprised as any good loyal Southholder could be when, in 1865, I began to study the settlement of Southampton critically, and discovered that all the previous historians had been wrong, because they had not seen the evidence which had come to light subsequent to their life and works. I was the first, so far as I know, to find evidence that the settlement of this town antedated that of Southold, and also the first to publish it, and this publication was in my history of Southampton. It is therefore on account of this interest in maintaining the truth that I have made a special study of these points again, and again come before the public.





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